

VZCZCXRO4032  
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW  
DE RUEHNE #2355/01 3241354  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 201354Z NOV 09  
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8668  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8101  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3789  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 7013  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1995  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1477  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 8667  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 8648  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 002355

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR P, SCA, SRAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/20/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: JAMMU AND KASHMIR: GOVERNMENT TALKS TO SEPARATISTS

REF: A. NEW DELHI 2208

[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 2195

[1](#)C. NEW DELHI 2155

[1](#)D. NEW DELHI 2135

Classified By: Political Counselor Uzra Zeya, Reasons 1.5 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Following up announcements by the Prime Minister and the Home Minister last month (ref a-c), the GOI and the Mirwaiz Omar Farooq-led separatists have publicly acknowledged that they are engaged in closed door talks. The separatists have indicated to Embassy that they intend to engage with a seriousness of purpose and are determined to get "results." The Mirwaiz and his colleague plan to visit Islamabad after November 27 in a bid to start a Srinagar-Islamabad dialogue so that they can bring Islamabad on board any agreement they reach with the GOI. That the GOI-separatist talks are underway is in all respects a positive development for stability in Kashmir. There remain formidable obstacles, however, on what these talks may be able to achieve and when. One of the principal hurdles is that hard-line separatist Syed Ali Shah Geelani remains opposed to any dialogue with New Delhi unless India concedes that Jammu and Kashmir is a disputed territory. The mention of India and Pakistan in the U.S.-China Joint Statement released in Beijing and the announcement by the Mirwaiz that he intends to visit China could have a dampening effect on the pace and scope of the GOI-separatist talks in the short term. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) As promised by Home Minister P. Chidambaram on October 14 in Srinagar (Ref C) and endorsed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on October 28 in the valley (ref A), the dialogue between GOI and the Kashmiri separatists is underway. Both sides have publicly acknowledged that the process has begun. In line with Chidambaram's October 14 announcement that the discussions will be "quiet" and "behind closed doors," the GOI has refused to share any details. The separatists have been more willing to talk to the press but have also been evasive on the substance of the discussions.

Press Coverage: Long on Hype, Short on Substance  
-----

[1](#)3. (SBU) There has been at least one daily story over the

last week in each of the major national newspapers on "secret" meetings between the Home Minister and Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, the Chairman of the separatist All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC). The Hindu reported that Chidambaram and the Mirwaiz have met twice, once before the Home Minister's October 13-14 visit to Srinagar and once last week. Many of the stories cited unnamed officials in the Home Ministry as sources and described in detail the vehicle changes and pick-up/drop-off maneuvers made to ensure the meetings in New Delhi were clandestine. Beyond reporting that the dialogue is taking place, the press coverage has been short on substance of the discussions, merely repeating historical snippets and providing brief coverage of the shades of opinion in separatist camp.

#### Sanctity of the Dialogue

-----

¶4. (C) In a November 18 conversation with Poloff, separatist leader Bilal Lone, who belongs to the moderate Mirwaiz faction of the APHC, confirmed that the separatists are talking to the GOI. He observed that his group is approaching the discussion with a seriousness of purpose that was missing in 2005, the last time that the GOI engaged with the separatists. "We are determined to get results this time," he said. Lone, who is generally candid and forthcoming with Poloff, pleaded for "sanctity" of the dialogue, saying it is imperative that discussions remain close hold until there are some concrete deliverables. He expressed great concern at the media's coverage of the

NEW DELHI 00002355 002 OF 003

GOI-separatist dialogue, saying that the press is over-hyping the story beyond what it deserves at this point.

¶5. (C) Separatist leader Abdul Ghani Bhat also confirmed to Poloff on November 18 that there is active GOI-separatist engagement, but did not say whether it was the Home Minister or someone else in the GOI that met the separatists. Bhat, who had just spent two weeks in Delhi, also underlined the importance of keeping the discussions out of the public debate for now. "Quiet dialogue means quiet dialogue," he added.

#### Swing Through Islamabad

-----

¶6. (C) Bilal Lone and Abdul Ghani Bhat, in separate conversations with Poloff, disclosed that plans are in process for APHC leaders to visit to Islamabad at the invitation of the Pakistani Government after Id-ul-Fitr on November 27. Hinting at some disagreement on this point within the Mirwaiz group, Bhat said that the Mirwaiz wants to go but the visit is still in the "maybe" stage. There have been several press reports that both the Mirwaiz and Bhat have met recently with Pakistani Embassy officials.

#### Solution Needs to Be Inclusive

-----

¶7. (C) While there are varying views among the Kashmir players and among Kashmir watchers on the utility and optimum pace, tempo and substance of the GOI-separatist dialogue, there is growing agreement that a sustainable outcome requires that the GOI and the Mirwaiz bring along Islamabad as well as hardliner Syed Ali Shah Geelani and others outside the Mirwaiz orbit such as Yasin Malik, Shabir Shah and Nayeem Khan. Veteran newspaperman and owner-editor of the Kashmir Times Ved Bhasin told PolFSN that the Kashmir solution requires an "all inclusive" approach that at least covers Islamabad and Geelani. With the Pakistan Government preoccupied by its own internal challenges, he believes this is an opportune time for the GOI to make progress with Pakistan. Others such as The Hindu journalist Praveen Swami, who also appreciate the need to carry Islamabad and Geelani, believe the exact opposite-- that the beleaguered Pakistani

Government is not in a position to strike any deal on Kashmir for fear that it will be painted by political opponents and Islamists as a concession to India.

18. (C) The Mirwaiz has sent many signals that he understands the importance of bringing Geelani along and securing Pakistan's blessing on the GOI-separatist dialogue. He has defended his decision to talk to the GOI by saying that in doing so he hopes the separatists can facilitate the restart of India-Pakistan engagement. While Geelani has dug in his heels on a tripartite dialogue that has the APHC, Pakistan and India at the same table, the Mirwaiz has pursued a variation that has three different dialogues -- Delhi-Srinagar, Srinagar-Islamabad, and Islamabad-Delhi.

Comment: House Divided  
-----

19. (C) That the GOI and at least some separatist factions are engaged in talks is very encouraging for regional stability because the separatist sentiment is an important Kashmiri reality. Any Kashmir agreement that purports to represent the wishes of the Kashmiri people must have the separatist imprimatur. There is a need for caution, however, about what these talks might be able to achieve and in what time-frame. The obstacles are formidable (ref c). Press coverage of the GOI-separatist meetings has provoked an avalanche of press interactions by Kashmiri separatist and mainstream political leaders that demonstrate their wide range of positions on strategies, tactics, and objectives. It will be challenging for the Mirwaiz camp and the GOI to

NEW DELHI 00002355 003 OF 003

get any semblance of a Kashmiri consensus. The biggest of these challenges will be Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who remains firm in his refusal to talk to the GOI. He and his Jamaat-e-Islami have a relatively small but committed and loyal following. He is more feared, however, for his ability to mobilize protests and bring people on to the streets through his uncompromising anti-India rhetoric.

Comment: Fallout of U.S.-China Joint Statement  
-----

10. (C) The pace of GOI-separatist talks could be slowed temporarily by the storm that has ensued in the Indian media over the mention of India-Pakistan relations in the U.S.-China Joint Statement issued in Beijing during President Obama's China visit. While a senior MEA official downplayed the outcry over the U.S.-China Joint Statement as media hype, the dominant underlying theme of the press commentary has been to cry foul and accuse the U.S. and China of interfering in India-Pakistan issues which are considered bilateral matters as an article of faith in the Indian political establishment. Provocative headlines such as "Needless Meddling by U.S." have been used to mischaracterize the joint statement and imply that the United States is nefariously bringing China into the India/Pakistan/Kashmir equation. The announcement by the Mirwaiz shortly after the release of the joint statement that he would visit China for a conference further fueled this suspicion.

WHITE